

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

METHOD AND APPRATUS FOR NETWORK IDENTIFICATION

A processing unit, for example a computer server, that is connectable to a data
5 communications network, has a device reader for reading a supplied network identity
from a portable storage device such as a smart card or the like. The processing unit
then uses the supplied network identity from the portable storage device for
communicating via the data communications network. The processing unit monitors
the continued presence of the portable storage device. In the event that the processing
10 unit detects that the portable storage device has been removed from the device reader,
it signals a fault state. The processing unit can be arranged to power itself down
where a portable storage device having same network identity is not returned in the
device reader within a predetermined time. As a result, the processing unit from
which the portable storage device was removed can enable action to be taken to avoid
15 a network failure that could result from two processing units on the network have the
same network identity (e.g., as a result of placing the removed storage device in
another processing unit). Following removal of the portable storage device from the
device reader, the processing unit monitors for the presence of a portable storage
device in the device reader. If it detects a newly present portable storage device, it
20 reads a network identity from the newly present portable storage device and compares
the read network identity to a stored copy of the original network identity. If the
network identities match, then the processing unit can be operable to cancel the timer
and accept the newly present portable storage device.

25 Fig. 9